

FORT LEWIS INDIAN SCHOOL

Educ.  
Box 7C  
# 3 c.3

1892-1911

The following statistics are taken from three sources: The Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, "School Statistics Accompanying the Annual Report" from the Superintendent of Fort Lewis School, and reports of the Inspector of Indian Schools. None of the three sources are complete for all of the years 1892-1911, but the following figures are abstracted from those three sources.

- 1892: At the close of the military period (1892) Fort Lewis was immediately (March 17, 1892) converted into an Indian School to educate and "civilize" Indians.

Mr. Lewis Morgan of Fort Defiance was transferred by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to Fort Lewis to take charge of the school and in a very short time he had the school organized and in operation, using the buildings left by the Army. Morgan brought five Navajos with him to start the school. On April 23, sixteen Southern Utes arrived and by September 1, four additional Navajos and 26 Mescalero Apaches had arrived, making a total of 51 as of that date.

- 1893: On August 30, there were 45 pupils in attendance. On December 15, there were 128 pupils in attendance with the average attendance for the past twelve months being 62. There must have been considerable resentment on the part of some of the Indians since they destroyed several barracks by burning them along with most of the houses on "officers' row."

- 1894: On April 10, attendance at school: 132; 111 boys, 21 girls

Navajos 11	Mescalero Apaches 25	Jicarilla Apaches 26
Southern Utes 8	San Carlos Apaches 13	White Mt. Apaches 34
Papagos 4	Pimas 4	Diggers 4

In the summer of 1894, activity was interrupted by the outbreak of an epidemic, during the course of which some died. This enraged some already skeptical and superstitious parents who came and took many of the children away by force. The school had to be abandoned for over a year during which time vandals looted and stripped it of everything of value, even the plumbing fixtures and pipes.

After there was no further danger from the epidemic, the superintendent returned to operate the school again, bringing with him several Pimas and Papagos.

- 1895: On June 30, 183 in attendance (71 were Navajos). Report of July 16, 1895, said only 5 Utes were in attendance.

In the fall of 1895, over 300 Indians, representing several different tribes, and a few Mexican Americans reported to the school. Some were less than 5 years of age and a few were only 3 years old. Some pupils attended the school for more than 10 years.

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- 1896: During fiscal year, 195 enrolled; 151 average attendance; 19 Jicarilla Apaches.
- 1897: On June 30, 186 boys, 111 girls = 297 total. Average attendance was 198.
- 1898: Male 221, Female 149 = 370 total. Fifteen tribes represented--Navajos, Apaches and Pueblos in majority.
- 1899: Average attendance for year 313.66.
- 1900: Enrollment of 412, but had capacity for only 300. Average attendance was 307. Twenty-five Southern Ute children placed at Fort Lewis; some ran away; one died.
- 1901: Attendance on May 7, 1901, was 350.
- 1902: No report available.
- 1903: 87 male, 42 female enrolled on March 31, 1903. Later in the year, 136 were reported enrolled with 118 average attendance.
- 1904: In January, the enrollment was 178. Later report said: 175 enrolled; 151 average attendance.
- 1905: 198 enrolled; 180 average attendance.
- 1906: No report available.
- 1907: 242 enrolled; 192 average attendance.
- 1908: No report available.
- 1909: 40 enrolled; 35 average attendance.
- 1910: No report available.
- 1911: Page 30 of Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs

" . . . the governor of Colorado similarly to Utah's in regards to the Ouray school accepted the buildings and fixtures of the Fort Lewis school and of the Grand Junction school. Each of these school is to be maintained by the State as an institution of learning to which Indian students will be admitted free of tuition and on an equality with white students."

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## THE INDIAN SCHOOL AT FORT LEWIS

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Mr. Lewis Morgan of Fort Defiance was transferred by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to Fort Lewis to take charge of the school and in a very short time he had the school organized and in operation, using the buildings left by the Army. Morgan brought several Navajos with him to start the school. Nearly one hundred (mostly Utes) Indian men, women and children came for training from Ignacio, the Blue Mountains and Navajo Springs (now Towaoc). Most of those who were enrolled were in school because they wanted to learn more of the white man's ways. They were taught the English language, reading, writing, some arithmetic and a little history. These subjects ordinarily occupied the first half of the day and during the other half they were engaged in some vocational pursuit which was a very important part of their training. Several of the men and boys worked on the farm and many of them were very apt in managing the horse drawn machinery while others proved to be just as accomplished with the livestock and especially with the dairy herd.

Others were engaged in caring for the garden plots; women did the baking and cooking; some men were busy at the blacksmith trade; others were engaged in the shops supplying shoes and clothing, or occupied with building and remodeling the barracks which had been inherited from the soldiers. There must have been considerable resentment on the part of some of the Indians since they destroyed several barracks by burning them along with most of the houses on "officers row."<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 1894, activity was interrupted by the outbreak of an epidemic, during the course of which some died. This enraged some already skeptical and superstitious parents who came and took many of the children away by force. The school had to be abandoned for over a year, during which time vandals looted and stripped it of everything of value, even the plumbing fixtures and pipes.

After there was no further danger from the epidemic, the superintendent returned to operate the school again, bringing with him several Pimas and Papagoes. Eventually, the school had about 400 pupils with 20 to 30 teachers and expert farm and dairy men. In the fall of 1895, over 300 Indians, representing several different tribes, and a few Mexican-Americans reported to the school. Some were less than 5 years of age and a few were only 3 years old. Some pupils attended the school for more than 10 years.<sup>2</sup>

In 1900, Fort Lewis School employed 28 persons; had a capacity for 300 students, but had an enrollment of 412. The average attendance of that year was 307. Of the 412 enrolled, 25 were Ute children, some of whom ran away and 1 of whom died at the school.<sup>3</sup>

When schools were established on the Indian reservations, there was no further need for the Indian school at Fort Lewis. By the Federal Indian Appropriation Bill of April 4, 1910, the reservation of 6,318 acres (approximately 10 sections of land) was given to the State of Colorado to become part of the land-grant system, provided that a state school be established and maintained on the property and that Indians be admitted tuition free and upon a basis of equality with white students.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the area served by Fort Lewis as an Indian school included the states of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and possibly Utah. Of Indian groups that can be documented as having attended Fort Lewis from 1892 to 1910 there were Navajos, Utes (present-day Southern Utes and Ute Mountain Utes) and by accident a few Pimas and Papagoes.

<sup>1</sup> Mary C. Ayres, "History of Fort Lewis, Colorado," Colorado Magazine, VII, . No. 3, pp. 81-92.

<sup>2</sup> Floyd A. Pollock, "History of Fort Lewis College," (Ms. in Center of Southwest Studies).

<sup>3</sup> Annual Report of the Dept. of the Interior. Indian Affairs (1900), pp. 16, 214, 422.

<sup>4</sup> Robert W. Delaney, "Fort Lewis, Then and Now," Durango Herald, Basin Booster Edition, 1970; Fort Lewis In-Toto Vol. 1, #1 (June 6, 1927).